

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 1636

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, GR, XH
SUBJECT: GOG VIEW OF ITS RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE

1. AMBASSADOR GEORGE MAZARAKIS, THE DIRECTOR OF THE GREEK FOREIGN
MINISTRY DIVISION RESPONSIBLE FOR GREEK RELATIONS WITH
THE SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN EUROPE, REVIEWED RECENT
DEVELOPMENTS IN THAT AREA WITH THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR
AND AN EMBASSY OFFICER, FEBRUARY 22. FOLLOWING ARE
HIGHLIGHTS OF THAT CONVERSATION.

2. SOVIET UNION

-- PRESS SPECULATION TO THE CONTRARY, IT IS UNLIKELY
THAT PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS WILL VISIT THE SOVIET
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UNION THIS YEAR. MAZARAKIS EXPLAINED THAT SCHEDULING
DIFFICULTIES ALONE ARGUED AGAINST IT. HE SAID
FOREIGN MINISTER PAPALIGOURAS' VISIT, FOR WHICH A
DATE HAS NOT YET BEEN SET, CANNOT TAKE PLACE BEFORE
THE END OF JUNE AT THE EARLIEST AND THERE WOULD NOT BE
TIME SUBSEQUENTLY TO ARRANGE FOR A FOLLOW-UP VISIT BY
CARAMANLIS.

-- THE GOG EXPECTS THE DATE FOR PAPALIGOURAS' VISIT TO BE SET "SOON". THE PENDING GREEK AND SOVIET CONSULAR AND CULTURAL AGREEMENTS CAN BE WOUND UP FAIRLY QUICKLY TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE TWO FOREIGN MINISTERS TO SIGN THE AGREEMENTS DURING PAPALIGOURAS' VISIT.

--THE SOVIET HAVE NOT ASKED THE GREEKS IF PAPALIGOURAS WILL SIGN A "POLITICAL DOCUMENT" AT THE CLOSE OF HIS VISIT ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE A COMMUNIQUE THAT IS MORE THAN A STANDARD ONE. MAZARAKIS SAID HE ARGUED THAT ANYTHING MORE SUBSTANTIAL THAN THE TRADITIONAL KIND OF COMMUNIQUE SHOULD BE LEFT FOR A VISIT AT THE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT LEVEL.

--THE CONSULAR AGREEMENT IS ALMOST COMPLETED. A SOVIET NEGOTIATING TEAM IS EXPECTED HERE IN EARLY MARCH TO PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON IT. IT WOULD SEEM, FROM AMBASSADOR MAZARAKIS' COMMENTS, THAT THE AGREEMENT WILL BE A PRETTY BLAND AFFAIR AS THE SOVIETS HAVE TURNED ASIDE GREEK EFFORTS TO SECURE SPECIAL PROVISIONS WHICH WOULD HAVE FACILITATED THE DEPARTURE OF ETHNIC GREEKS FROM THE SOVIET UNION, ALLOWED THEM TO TAKE MOST OF THEIR POSSESSIONS, AND CHANGED PRESENT PROCEDURES UNDER WHICH SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS TO REPATRIATES ARE ADMINISTERED BY THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SOVIET UNION AND IN PRACTICE REQUIRE THE REPATRIATE TO GET THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE GREEK COMMUNIST PARTY.

--THE CULTURAL AGREEMENT IS HUNG UP ON GREEK INSISTENCE THAT ALL CULTURAL EXCHANGES BE APPROVED BY THE RESPECTIVE FOREIGN MINISTRIES. THE SOVIETS' INFLEXIBLE REFUSAL TO INCORPORATE SUCH A PROVISION INTO THE FORMAL TEXT OF THE AGREEMENT HAS BEEN FOLLOWED BY A GOG PROPOSAL THAT THE AGREEMENT BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS WHICH WOULD INDICATE THAT ANY CULTURAL EXCHANGES BEYOND THOSE INCLUDED IN AN AGREED PROGRAM OF EXCHANGES WOULD BE HANDLED THROUGH THE RESPECTIVE FOREIGN MINISTRIES. THE GOG IS STILL WAITING FOR A RESPONSE ON THIS POINT.

3. COMMENT: OVERALL, AMBASSADOR MAZARAKIS DESCRIBED GREEK-SOVIET RELATIONS AS SLOWLY ACHIEVING "NORMALCY". CONCERNED BY THE TURKISH-SOVIET CONNECTION, THE GOG WOULD ALSO LIKE TO GET ON WITH THE TASK OF IMPROVING ITS SOMEWHAT DISTANT RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. IT IS DOUBTFUL AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, THAT THESE RELATIONS WILL MOVE MUCH BEYOND "NORMALCY".

ON THE ONE HAND, THE SOVIETS WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO SUBORDINATE GREECE TO TURKEY AS THEY SEEK TO EXPLOIT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AREA. ON THE OTHER, THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT IS RESTRAINED IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION BY ITS OWN IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL PREDILECTIONS FROM PURSUING TIES WITH MOSCOW VERY ARDENTLY.

4. THE BALKANS: AMBASSADOR MAZARAKIS SAID THAT INITIATIVES FOR MULTILATERAL BALKAN COOPERATION ARE AT A VIRTUAL STANDSTILL DUE TO BULGARIAN OBSTRUCTIONISM AND INSISTENCE ON BILATERAL TIES. HE SAW LITTLE HOPE THAT THERE WOULD BE ANY CHANGE IN THE BULGARIAN POSITION THOUGH HE NOTED THAT AT LONG LAST THE

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BULGARIANS HAVE APPROVED ONE MULTILATERAL PROJECT FOR FURTHER STUDY.

5. YUGOSLAVIA. AMBASSADOR MAZARAKIS SEEMED TO CONFIRM A RISING LEVEL OF DISCOMFORT WITHIN THE GOG OVER PRO-MACEDONIAN ACTIVITIES ORIGINATING IN SKOPJE. THUS HE ENDORSED AS "JUST ABOUT RIGHT IN TONE AND CONTENT" A RECENT GREEK NEWSPAPER COLUMN WHICH CRITICIZES YUGOSLAV REFERENCES TO A MACEDONIAN MINORITY IN GREECE. THE COLUMN, WHICH MAY WELL HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, CONCLUDED WITH THE STATEMENT THAT "FOR THE GOOD OF GREEK-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS SKOPJE MUST ABANDON THE FICTION ABOUT A MACEDONIAN MINORITY IN GREECE". MAZARAKIS WAS VERY RELAXED ABOUT OPPOSITION LEADER ANDREAS PAPANDREOU'S FEBRUARY 17-19 VISIT TO BELGRADE WHICH INCLUDED A TWO HOUR MEETING WITH TITO. ALTHOUGH PAPANDREOU HAS SOUGHT TO PORTRAY THE VISIT PUBLICLY AS A TRIUMPH OF PERSONAL DIPLOMACY IN GAINING YUGOSLAV SUPPORT FOR GREECE IN ITS DISPUTES WITH TURKEY, MAZARAKIS SAID IT APPEARED TO HIM THAT THE YUGOSLAVS HAD STUCK PRETTY MUCH TO THEIR STANDARD (NEUTRAL) LINE ON THE MATTER.

6. POLAND. THE POLES ARE PRESSING VERY HARD FOR CARAMANLIS TO VISIT WARSAW. SUCH A VISIT, IF IT TAKES PLACE THIS YEAR AT ALL, WOULD FOLLOW A VISIT BY THE POLISH FOREIGN MINISTER TO ATHENS, RETURNING FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS' VISIT TO WARSAW LAST YEAR. MAZARAKIS IMPLIES THAT CARAMANLIS HAS LITTLE INTEREST IN ACCEPTING THE POLISH INVITATION, ADDING, HOWEVER, THAT IF HE DOES TRAVEL TO WARSAW, THE PRIME MINISTER MIGHT AT THE SAME TIME ALSO FOLLOW UP ON STANDING INVITATIONS TO VISIT CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY.

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